

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

OPEN TO ALL - OPEN TO GOD
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JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

We are now in the season of Lent, when we remember Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. At his baptism Jesus discovered his vocation, but was immediately driven out into the wilderness by the Spirit (Mark 1:12). Seems quite a violent action for the Spirit, who has only just descended like a dove! In the wilderness Jesus faced all the uncertainties of his new-found mission. He was tempted to make dramatic gestures, rather than patiently follow through the will of God. His forty days there echo the forty days the people of Israel spent in the wilderness following their escape from Egypt. They had walked through the Red Sea unharmed, but now faced an uncertain future. Hunger and thirst loomed.

In February we said goodbye to Nigel, our vicar. He has followed his call to move on, and it may feel as though the rest of us are left behind in the wilderness. We will be living with uncertainty for a while. No longer can the response to any problem be, 'Ask the Vicar'. Different people will be leading the service each week. We don't know how long the interregnum will last, or who our new vicar will be. In this 'wilderness', the best resource we have is each other. We will journey together. Each person has their part to play. Simply by continuing to come to church each Sunday you

are contributing to the ongoing life of The Old Church. Be patient when visiting priests don't do things quite as we expect. And if you notice some little thing that needs doing, don't assume that someone else will take care of it – maybe you can. The people on whom much of the burden falls are the churchwardens, so be nice to them! Ask whether you can help. It's not just practicalities which are important, pastoral responsibilities need shouldering too, so let's take care of each other, and provide emotional support to those who need it.

'Wilderness' is not only about uncertainty. It is also about opportunity, even revelation. It was in the wilderness that God appeared to the people of Israel on Mt Sinai, with guidance on how to live as a community. We may discover more about ourselves, each other, and our life as a community; it may even be a revelation. This is a time to give thanks for all that Nigel gave us, and then open ourselves to new possibilities. Think of it as an adventure!

According to Matthew's Gospel, after Jesus had resisted the devil's temptations, 'behold, angels came and ministered to him' (Matthew 3:11). Let us resist the temptation to grumble, panic or despair, and instead act as angels for each other.

Ann Conway-Jones

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

February began with a service of Candlemas as we remembered the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Baby Joa Victory Neil and her family were welcomed for her baptism when Joa's great-aunt, Rev'd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, gave a reflective and glowing sermon.

The period of reflection continued as Ash Wednesday heralded the beginning of Lent with a service offering the Imposition of Ashes.

Saturday 16th February saw over one hundred well-wishers from St Matthews, Holy Trinity and Old Church come together to thank and bid a fond and loving farewell to Reverend Nigel Mason. Tributes to Nigel flowed as he leaves Smethwick after six years of ministry, to

take up a Hospice Chaplaincy in Devon. The party began with a tremendous feast, prepared by many from the congregations. This was followed by Big Fish and Junior Church paying their tribute to Nigel with an amusing mime sketch. The evening culminated with speeches and presentations from representatives of the churches and the Dorothy Parkes Centre, ending with Nigel thanking everyone for a wonderful evening and for the fellowship he had received during his life in Smethwick.

The following morning was Nigel's final service at Old Church when he presided and preached to a full church. The service concluded with thanks to Nigel from Reader Paul Martin and Rev'd Michael Goss and loud applause, cheers and singing of "For he's a jolly good fellow."

FEATURED AUTHOR - JOYCE MAYER

The Old Church's library has three new titles by the New York Times best-selling author, Joyce Mayer.

Joyce leads Christian conferences and heads up a foundation operating in various poor countries providing the building and running of schools plus delivering food relief programmes.



'Do Yourself a Favour . . . FORGIVE' reflects on the unfairness of life and the damaging effects on the emotions this may create. She shares a number of effective strategies that anyone may use to untie the knots and snarls that life sometimes ties us in.

'The Power of Simple Prayer' shows how we may talk with God about anything and everything. Joyce answers basic questions such as *'what is prayer and how do we do it?'* She discusses hindrances to prayer and how to overcome them. Through an artless but agreeable approach Joyce opens the way for anyone to enter into simple prayer.

In **'Power Thoughts'** Joyce shows that where the mind goes, the person follows. She reveals 12 Biblical strategies that may be utilised to manage those unwelcome thoughts that impinge on and sometimes sour our everyday life. She aims to help people to help themselves to win the battle of their mind and encounter peaceful outcomes.

These books will be on display at the back of Church for anyone to borrow.



MARCH

- 1st 2.30 pm **Women's World Day of Prayer** service at Holy Trinity
- 7th, **Lent Groups** with other churches at
14th & Holy Trinity 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm
21st (lasting about one hour)
- 18th 7.30 pm St Philip's Cathedral, B'ham
Ecumenical prayer with Brother Paolo from the Taize Community
- 21st **Discoverers' Outing** to Greyfriars House and Garden
- 24th **10.15 am Palm Sunday Eucharist** (with procession from Dorothy Parkes Centre)
- 28th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church
- 28th **Maundy Thursday** 8.00 pm **Holy Communion with washing of feet/hands** followed by **Watch**
- 29th **Good Friday** 10.00 am **Walk of Witness** at Holy Trinity; 12 noon **Stations of the Cross** in The Old Church; 2.00 pm **Songs of Praise and Liturgy of the Cross** at St Matthews' (ending at 3.00 pm)
- 31st **10.15 am Easter Sunday Eucharist**

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

**Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?
Matthew 6: 28-30**

And life is worth the living, just because He Lives!